

This report is part of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's EU Survey on Whole-of-Government Approaches to External Conflict and Crises (WGA) 2020. More on the WGA at <https://www.wga-project.eu>.

Please cite as follows: Bertelsmann Stiftung, WGA 2020 Country Report – Luxembourg. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License ([CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)) 

## Luxembourg Report

*Patrick Heck*

### 1 | Introduction

In the late 1990s, with the lessons learned in the Yugoslav Wars, Luxembourg policymakers and politicians realised the need to put in place a 3D (diplomacy, development, defence) approach. Many factors led to a more integrative approach, such as the need to seek synergies between the ministries concerned, the need to pool limited human and financial resources in order to have a bigger effect and better coordination, the need to eliminate waste and duplications, the need to eliminate competition between government departments, the growing realisation that internal security is very much linked to external security, the evidence that development and cooperation aid can actually prevent crises, and the important realisation that post-conflict situations can only be stabilised using non-military resources.

The government that came into office in June 1999 first stated in its government programme its desire to establish a 3D approach and cross-government whole-of-government approach (WGA) in the fields of foreign and security policy. In 1999, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) bureaucracies were merged following the creation of a political-military committee between the ministries in April of that year, which itself represented a recognition of the need to bring these two communities together.

While the bureaucracies were merged, there remain two members of the government with a distinct political responsibility for defence and foreign affairs, respectively. A Directorate for International Aid and Development already existed within the MFA (which is now called the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, or MFEA). Once foreign affairs, defence and

international development aid were brought together into a single institution, all three elements of 3D were under the same roof, so to speak, which made cooperation much easier.

Thenceforth, in terms of shaping policy, 3D became more and more of a reality. In Kosovo, in Afghanistan and, later, in Africa, the 3D approach was actively pursued through this 'joint bureaucracy', which jointly elaborated various policies for decision-makers. Such decisions could relate to a wide range of issues, such as deploying troops abroad, funding development and cooperation packages, and engaging diplomatically with and on behalf of countries in crisis.

The joint bureaucracy worked together, exchanged information, developed policies and exploited synergies. This enabled the three sectorial policies to be better informed of their respective plans and policies, and it facilitated joint decision-making. In other words, when the defence department was thinking about deploying troops to country X in crisis, it would inform the other two departments in the 3D nexus. These other two departments could then decide to also develop a policy in support of country X, which the defence department was preparing to support with military resources. The 3D 'bureaucracy' also makes it easier to implement decisions reached at an international level through national 3D or WGA processes.

The 3D approach is a good fit for Luxembourg's specific characteristics. It is a small country with a small bureaucracy (in absolute terms). Communication lines are short and (generally) fast. Information circulates well between agencies. The level of transparency between ministries involved in crisis management is good. At the level of senior civil servants, people knew each other and understood the need to keep each other informed. Given these circumstances, putting a 3D approach in place came (fairly) easily and naturally after 1999.

Luxembourg's financial resources are small (in absolute terms). Combining efforts and pooling budget articles through a 3D approach yields bigger amounts for a 'bigger bang'. Indeed, 3D made sense from a political point of view (from the vision perspective), from a practical point of view (better effect, better efficiency, better control, better coordination, better implementation), and from a budgetary point of view. With the growing visibility of this 3D approach both at home and abroad, WGAs have been adopted across government, i.e. beyond just the fields of foreign and security policy. What's more, civil servants have generally come to have a positive mindset about it. In view of its positive experience with 3D, Luxembourg is actively supporting such approaches at the international level. The only missing piece, of course, is a detailed, spelled-out strategy.

## 2 | What policies have been developed to further policy coherence?

While there is no stand-alone WGA strategy or policy paper in Luxembourg, 3D or integrated approaches appear in many sectorial policy papers. For example the country's defence guidelines for 2025 and beyond (MFEA 2017: 13), notes that Luxembourg "supports national and international peace and stability efforts in a holistic and coherent approach combining diplomacy, development cooperation and defence (known as the '3D approach')", adding that its military "is also a component of Luxembourg's foreign policy which, in conjunction with traditional diplomacy and development-cooperation policy, contributes to conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction." The country's most recent development-cooperation strategy (Luxembourg Aid & Development 2018: 1) states that Luxembourg "considers

development cooperation as a key pillar of its foreign policy's 3D approach (diplomacy, development and defence) and therefore actively engages with multilateral organisations, while supporting ongoing reforms in the international development system and promoting global efforts towards poverty eradication, environmental sustainability and human rights." The MFEA's mission statement (MFEA 2019) says that the ministry "endeavours to promote a coherent approach towards diplomacy, defence, development and immigration." And, most recently, Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn's speech to parliament on 13 March 2019 on Luxembourg's foreign policy (Asselborn 2019) underlined that: "Luxembourg is committed, both through a multidimensional approach (i.e. the '3D' approach of diplomacy, development and defence) and through a multilateral approach, to help concretely to build peace, security and prosperity where everyday life has hitherto been marked by conflict and poverty."

The 3D approach has also paid off for Luxembourg. For example, it has enabled improved circulation of information; allowed for a more thorough preparation of decisions, actions, policies; and made possible more efficient monitoring of implementation. The institutional merger of the core ministries (diplomatic service, defence and development aid) dealing with internal crisis management and the creation of multiple inter-ministerial working groups has not only generated a more coherent and efficient foreign policy, but also fostered the formation of WGAs across the government. Most importantly, it has instilled a cooperative WGA mindset.

Furthermore, the 3D approach has led various government stakeholders to strongly embrace a coherent, common and integrated WGA, especially in the field of international crisis management, where Luxembourg's small territorial size can only be compensated for by pooling its national resources and expertise. Indeed, nowadays, references to 3D, to WGA, to integrated approaches or to multidimensional approaches can be found in a wide variety of government documents related to crisis management, including cybersecurity, military mobility, hybrid threats, human rights, sustainable development and climate change.

### **3 | Who are the main actors involved in cooperating in a WGA?**

Luxembourg has a WGA when it comes to implementing international norms, decisions and agreements. It is most pronounced in the field of international peace and security in the widest sense possible, of which I will provide four examples. First, an inter-departmental working group chaired by the MFEA's director-general for political affairs brings together all relevant ministries and oversees the formulation of the national plan of action for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN's 2030 Agenda, both at home and through Luxembourg's development-cooperation efforts abroad. This working group regularly reports to the government on progress made, and it prepares the reports to the UN's high-level political forum on sustainable development. Second, the Interministerial Committee on Human Rights – again, using a WGA – oversees the reporting to the UN treaty bodies as well as to the Council of Europe in addition to holding frequent consultations with civil society by convening regular meetings, exchanging information and soliciting feedback. Third, a national Inter-ministerial Committee for Development Cooperation was set up by law in 1996 and is under the MFEA's Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs. And, fourth, a Political-Military Committee was established by ministerial decree in April 1999.

The drivers/chairs of these joint institutions are the MFEA's Directorate of Political Affairs, Directorate of Defence, and Directorate of Development Cooperation. Other participants include the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health, the High Commission for National Protection, the army staff headquarters and the national police.

These institutions meet officially at the levels of ministers and senior officials, and they work on the basis of a formal invitation, formal agenda and formal report. Daily contacts and interaction exist between desks and/or experts. Officials from embassies or permanent representations (e.g. to the EU, NATO and the UN) can be included in the formal meetings via digital conferencing. When preparations are being made for Luxembourg personnel to formally participate in an international peacekeeping operation, the Chamber of Deputies, as the parliament is known, has to be consulted as a matter of law. This is because, by law, the parliament's Committee on Internal Security and Defence has to vote on whether to give favourable advice for such actions. It should be noted that defence used to be part of a committee called the Committee on Foreign and European Affairs, Defence, Cooperation and Immigration, which comprised all three 3D elements. Although the new coalition government formed in late 2018 decided to split defence and foreign affairs, this should in no way be interpreted as a rethinking of the 3D policy, to which Luxembourg remains firmly committed. The splitting occurred because the parliament wanted to exercise better oversight over defence policy as the defence budget and structures are growing to meet Luxembourg's so-called '2 percent commitment' to NATO. Furthermore, although the government is not bound by the parliament's vote, it has always followed the committee's vote. Moreover, the 1992 law that provides for this consultation procedure is now being updated to make decision-making faster and more reactive so as to be in line with the tempo of international crises.

## 4 | How does your country operationalise a WGA?

Above, I have listed the various interdepartmental bodies and committees or working groups that ensure the functioning of a WGA in Luxembourg. Of these, the merger of the three key bureaucracies in 1999 has been the key enabler. The Political-Military Committee is the operational arm of this integrated structure. It operates a permanent review of issues related to international crisis management in addition to making recommendations on policy and decisions. This committee meets at regular intervals, holding at least five ordinary meetings per year, and is chaired by the director general for political affairs. It reports to the three members of government (i.e. the MFEA's minister of foreign and European affairs, minister for development cooperation and humanitarian affairs, and minister of defence), and it involves the embassies when called for by its agenda.

At the political level, when in session, the Government Council reviews international affairs on a weekly basis under a dedicated agenda item. Once a crisis exists and crisis-management measures have been taken by the EU or NATO, the High Commission for National Protection (HCNP) is activated and implements the declared crisis measures on a national level.

This Government Council has working groups that are activated depending on the particular nature of the crisis. These working groups are under the authority of the High-level Council of National Protection (CSPN), an inter-ministerial committee chaired by the HCNP. The

composition of the working groups varies depending on the nature of their areas of competence. During a crisis, both the Political-Military Committee and the HCNP report to the government through the minister for foreign affairs and the prime minister, respectively. This WGA enables the committees to have full situational awareness of all elements of a crisis, which in turn helps them make better-informed decisions.

One should note that, as a purely advisory body, the above-mentioned Inter-ministerial Committee for Development Cooperation is not involved in the daily (i.e. operational) management of an international security crisis. However, it reviews the lessons and/or needs from existing or past crises when defining its policies, priorities and budgets, together with representatives from the ministries of Foreign and European Affairs, Defence, Home Affairs and Justice, who are members of this committee by law.

Through these integrated structures, Luxembourg has been able to make timely, integrated contributions to the EU's missions and operations, to NATO's operations, to various international trust funds, and to peace initiatives. To list a few examples, Luxembourg has contributed to UN operations in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (UNPROFOR); to EU missions in Mali (EUTM) and Somalia (EU NAVFOR Operation Atalanta); and to several NATO efforts, including ones in Bosnia-Herzegovina (SFOR), Kosovo (KFOR), Afghanistan (ISAF and the Afghan National Army Trust Fund), Lithuania (Operation Resolute Support) and Central Asia (demining and demilitarisation trust funds).

## 5 | Conclusions

While Luxembourg lacks a detailed, spelled-out and written WGA/3D strategy, it is fair to say that such integrated approaches have become the default setting of the bureaucracy. Furthermore, despite the absence of an explicit WGA strategy or policy, the bureaucracy has been restructured based on the needs of a WGA. The WGA/3D strategy, which has generated concrete instruments, development-aid policies and joint efforts, enjoys strong political, public and bureaucratic support across the government. In fact, there is a great deal of enthusiasm for the 3D approach, especially because it has made the country more visible at the international level. For example, in recognition of Luxembourg's contributions to international peace and security, it was made a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2013 and 2014.

The objective of the 3D approach is to have a concrete impact on international peace and security through a concerted, integrated and pooled contribution to international crisis management. Luxembourg has realised the need to act through a WGA to make more, better and more consistent contributions to international peace, security and stability. This, in turn, has generated visibility for the country as a useful and credible net contributor to international security.

On the national level, Luxembourg's WGA has helped to establish and bolster a mindset across the government that the various bodies and institutions need to act in concert to make the country a more credible player on the international level. Apart from the traditional foreign policy and security actors in Luxembourg, a WGA has enabled other government departments and national stakeholders to see their usefulness in contributing to peace and security. Indeed,

the WGA has helped to show to other ministries that they, too, have an interest in and can contribute to international peace and security.

Furthermore, Luxembourg's WGA has been extremely helpful in terms of avoiding duplication and competition among departments. Now there is a sense of coherence, solidarity and coordination among the national players. All actors feel compelled to pitch in to help make Luxembourg a more efficient and more visible international player. The reward for all these efforts has been a sense of satisfaction and pride in the minds of the actors who participate in the national structures described in this contribution. There is a sense of accomplishment and of having made a difference by using an integrated approach to contribute to resolving international crises.

## 6 | Reference list

Asselborn, Jean (2019). Speech of Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn to Parliament on 13 March 2019.

[https://maee.gouvernement.lu/content/dam/gouv\\_maee/minist%C3%A8re/d%C3%A9clarations-de-politique-%C3%A9trang%C3%A8re/2019/FR-Declaration-de-politique-etrangere-2019.pdf](https://maee.gouvernement.lu/content/dam/gouv_maee/minist%C3%A8re/d%C3%A9clarations-de-politique-%C3%A9trang%C3%A8re/2019/FR-Declaration-de-politique-etrangere-2019.pdf).

Luxembourg Aid & Development (2018). Luxembourg's General Development Cooperation Strategy: The Road to 2030. <https://cooperation.gouvernement.lu/dam-assets/politique-cooperation-action-humanitaire/documents-de-reference/strat%C3%A9gie/Strat%C3%A9gie-MAEE-EN.pdf>.

HCNP (High Commission for National Protection). Remit. <https://hcnp.gouvernement.lu/en/service/attributions.html>.

MFEA (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs) (2017). Luxembourg Defence Guidelines for 2025 and Beyond. <https://defense.gouvernement.lu/dam-assets/la-defense/luxembourg-defence-guidelines-for-2025-and-beyond.pdf>.

MFEA (2019). Mission Statement. Updated 4 April 2019. <https://maee.gouvernement.lu/en/le-ministere.html>.